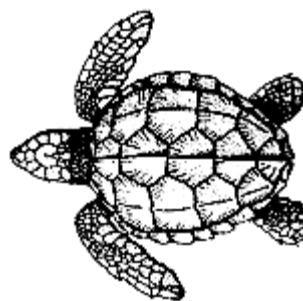


The Loggerhead

Southeast Asia/Pacific Regional Environment and Health News

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ASEAN Creates World's Largest Wildlife Law Enforcement Network

On December 1, 2005, representatives from ASEAN member nations met in Bangkok to launch the ASEAN Wildlife Law Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN). The new network, the largest wildlife law enforcement network in the world, will promote increased communication and cooperation among national authorities responsible for enforcement of CITES obligations. U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Ralph L. Boyce gave welcoming remarks at the meeting, expressing strong support for ASEAN's progress toward fighting international wildlife trafficking in the region, part of the multi-billion dollar illicit global trade in nature products.

CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) is an international agreement among 169 nations to protect wildlife involved in international trade. The 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP13) was held in Bangkok in October 2004. During his opening address at CoP13, Thailand's Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra called for the creation of a regional wildlife law enforcement network.

Also during CoP13, the ASEAN Statement on CITES was announced, listing focus areas for improvement of CITES implementation, including international cooperation between law enforcement agencies. Then in September 2005, ASEAN ministers endorsed the ASEAN Regional Action Plan on Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora, 2005-2010. One of the key objectives of the Action Plan is to create a regional law enforcement network among the 10 member countries.

These announcements complemented each other perfectly, so with full support from the U.S. government, ASEAN delegates met in October 2005 inside Khao Yai National Park, Thailand's oldest national park, to negotiate the structure of this regional network. Now, ASEAN-WEN is a reality. U.S. Department of State Deputy Assistant Secretary Claudia McMurray was instrumental in generating financial and political support for the network, and has high hopes for its regional

effectiveness and eventual partnership with in the State Department's global initiative, the Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking (CAWT).

The Royal Thai Government announced its intention to host the first ASEAN-WEN operational meeting in early 2006.

U.S.-Vietnam Science and Technology Days

The U.S. Embassy-Hanoi and the Vietnamese Ministry of Science and Technology co-sponsored the first U.S.-Vietnam Science and Technology (S&T) Days in Hanoi on November 15-16. S&T Days showcased U.S.-Vietnam scientific and technological achievements and included seminars on the commercialization of technology, disaster mapping and technology, water pollution, and the Millennium Science Initiative and Centers of Excellence. U.S. technical and foreign affairs agencies participating in the event included NIST, NIH, HHS, NOAA, USDA, NSF, Office of Naval Research, Department of State, USAID and the Vietnam Education Foundation.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of normalized diplomatic relations between the two countries, and the fifth year of the "Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam." The annual U.S.-Vietnam Joint Committee Meeting on Scientific and Technological Cooperation followed the S&T Days on November 17-18.

Laos Inaugurates Construction of Nam Theun II Dam

Thailand's Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra joined Lao PDR Prime Minister Sisavath Keobounphanh in a foundation stone-laying ceremony on November 27 as construction began on the Nam Theun 2 hydroelectric project. Thailand has contracted to purchase most of the dam's projected 1,070 MW power production capacity. Scheduled to be completed in 2009, the dam will provide Laos with a steady stream of hard currency while Thailand receives a renewable source of electricity to power its economic growth.

Avian Flu Update

President George W. Bush announced the creation of the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza (IPAPI) during the UN General Assembly in September 2005. The inaugural meeting of IPAPI was held October 6-7 in Washington, DC, organized by the U.S. Department of State. Representatives from 88 countries attended the meeting to discuss cooperation and transparency in national and international efforts to combat avian and pandemic flu. The three main areas of discussion were surveillance and prevention; preparedness, planning and outreach; and response and containment.

The United States is providing \$25 million in immediate funding to prevent and control the spread of avian influenza in Southeast Asia. On November 1, President Bush announced a national plan to prepare for the possible emergence of a human influenza pandemic and requested \$7.1 billion in funding to implement the plan. The plan includes three primary goals. First, global capacity must be strengthened for disease surveillance and detection. \$250 million is allocated to assist partner nations with training, surveillance and preparation for outbreak response. Second, global stockpiles of antiviral medications and vaccines must be created. Nearly \$3 billion is allocated for new vaccine research and production. Third, coordination mechanisms must be developed to allow governments and organizations to respond to widespread disease outbreaks.

The economic consequences of a severe human pandemic would be staggering. The outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in Asia in 2003 was contained after infecting about 8,000 people and killing about 800 over seven months. Economic damage in the region was estimated at up to \$60 billion, with travel and tourism businesses suffering the most. If a

pandemic affected not thousands but millions all over the globe, lasting months to years, the cost in lost output would dwarf this figure. Even with a relatively mild outbreak in Asia, assuming an infection rate of 20% and a population mortality rate of 0.1%, the Asian Development Bank estimates a potential loss of up to \$283 billion for Asia alone.

WildAid Ranger Training Course

With financial support from the U.S. government, international conservation NGO WildAid recently completed its latest training course for Cambodian national park rangers. Two weeks of rigorous training in Bokor National Park, Cambodia, enhanced the environmental protection capacities of 38 park rangers and other protection personnel. Since 2000, WildAid has organized 11 courses and trained more than 450 students in Cambodia. WildAid is also a key partner in the ASEAN-WEN and CAWT (see first article).

Regional Early Warning System Developments

Scientists and government officials from over 25 nations met in Hyderabad, India, on December 14-16 for the "Second Session of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission's Intergovernmental Coordination Group (IOC-ICG) for the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning & Mitigation System (IOTWS)". The goal of the talks was to plan and implement a tsunami early warning system for Indian Ocean countries by next year. Between May and September, national assessments of 16 countries in the Indian Ocean were conducted to identify capacity building needs and support requirements for developing an IOTWS. Many nations have already begun setting up national warning systems. The Hyderabad meeting failed to reach consensus on a complete regional system, but delegates were able to reach a general agreement to set up a regional Deep-ocean Assessment and Reporting of Tsunamis, or DART system, similar to the one in the Pacific.

U.S. Supports Pacific Coral Reef Conservation

In November, Palau hosted the 2005 General Meeting of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), a global partnership among more than 80 governments, international organizations, and NGOs that strives to preserve coral reefs and related ecosystems, "the rainforests of the oceans."

Immediately following the ICRI meeting, the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (CRTF) held its 14th semi-annual meeting in Koror. To enhance regional conservation and management efforts, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced a \$750,000 grant to the Pacific Islands Educational Partnership Consortium (PIEPC). The grant is designed help meet the goal of enhancing local conservation effectiveness by increasing the number of students who train and graduate in the marine and environmental sciences, including direct support for high school through undergraduate students from the Pacific Island community, curriculum development, teacher training, and enhancing research capabilities.

The CRTF was established in 1998 to lead U.S. efforts to preserve and protect coral reef ecosystems. Through the coordinated efforts of its members, including representatives of twelve federal agencies, the governors of seven states and territories, and the leaders of the Freely Associated States, the CRTF helps conserve and manage valuable coral reef ecosystems in the U.S. and internationally. NOAA and the U.S. Department of the Interior co-chair the CRTF.

Upcoming Events

- Third Global Conference on Oceans, Coasts, and Islands, UNESCO, Paris, January 23-28
www.globaloceans.org/paris3/index.html
 - World Water Day, UNESCAP, Bangkok, March 22 www.unescap.org/esd/index.asp
- To subscribe/unsubscribe, comment or submit ideas, please email REOBangkok@state.gov.